



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Interior Hopeful on California Water Outlook

Forecast Expected to Improve – Additional Water Supplies to be Made Available

02/26/2010

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced the Bureau of Reclamation's Initial 2010 Central Valley Project (CVP) Water Supply Forecast and steps the United States government is taking to seek additional water supplies for drought-stricken farmers. Snowpack and runoff forecasts are significantly improved over the past three years and, if current weather patterns continue, California may have an "average" or better water year.

If 2010 is an average water year, allocations can be anticipated as follows:

- Senior agricultural water users along the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers will be allocated 100 percent of their contract quantities (approximately 2.4 million acre feet);
- Friant Division agricultural water service contractors will be allocated 100 percent of Class 1 water;
- Eastside Division agricultural contractors (Stanislaus River) will be allocated 100 percent of their contract quantities (155,000 acre-feet);
- Agricultural water service contractors north of the Delta will be allocated 100 percent of their contract quantities;
- Agricultural water service contractors south of the Delta will be allocated 30 percent of their contract quantities;
- Municipal and industrial water service contractors north of the Delta will be allocated 100 percent, and those south of the Delta, 75 percent;
- Wildlife refuges north and south of the Delta will be allocated 100 percent of their "Level 2" water (approximately 400,000 acre feet).

These potential allocations are good news for the large majority of water users served by the Central Valley Project; however, the three previous years of drought and uncertainty regarding this water year present serious water supply challenges for west valley south of Delta agricultural water service contractors. In recognition of this fact, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has directed the Department of the Interior to work with other federal and state agencies and other parties to secure additional water opportunities for farmers south of the Delta.

"Valley farmers have suffered tremendously during California's three year drought," said Salazar. "With the support and guidance of Senator Feinstein, Senator Boxer, Congressmen Costa and Cardoza, and a number of stakeholders, the Department has identified actions that will provide additional water on top of what an average water year would deliver."

Under the Interior initiative, it is expected that the additional water supplies secured through the collective efforts of federal and state agencies and many stakeholders are likely to be in the range of 150,000 to 200,000 acre feet, amounts that represent approximately 8 to 10 percent of the south of Delta agricultural water service contract

quantities. These amounts represent new water supplies for 2010 that were not previously available to the west side. They would add to other supplies available to west side farmers through their own efforts and planning.

To augment Interior's initiative, the Department of Agriculture has resources for farmers and communities available. "The US Department of Agriculture is committed to using its resources to help farmers in the Central Valley," said Secretary Vilsack. "Next week a team from USDA headquarters will go to California to work with local USDA staff from Rural Development, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency to ensure that our farm and community programs are ready to be deployed and to ensure our conservation programs will provide more water in the Valley over the long term."

Assuming the necessary agreements and permits can be secured, the actions that are expected to provide additional supplies to the west side include: securing water from urban water suppliers in exchange arrangements; capturing and using excess restoration flows in the Mendota Pool; improved operations through more precise compliance with Old and Middle River flows by the Bureau of Reclamation and the State Water Project; additional water transfers to be made available from senior east side water users to the west side, over and above customary east to west side transfers; and authorization of additional pumping capacity at Banks Pumping Plant by the U.S. Corps of Engineers during times that are not restricted by water rights permit conditions or environmental requirements.

The measures that do not require additional agreements or permits will be implemented immediately. The Department will work with the state and other stakeholders on an on-going basis to confirm that progress is being made to secure these additional supplies.

"The Interior Department and my colleagues on the Federal Bay Delta Leadership Committee will work diligently and aggressively to provide these augmented water supplies, based on the recognition that this is a one-year, stop-gap measure to reduce the pain felt by farmers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley," said Salazar. "Delivering these water supplies will require the cooperation of many parties, and we are pleased that other water users and stakeholders, with the active encouragement of Senator Feinstein, are stepping up to the plate to make it happen."

Although current weather patterns suggest that 2010 may be an average or better water year for California, the Bureau of Reclamation and the State of California also provide an official allocation at this time of year. That allocation is based on a "dry year" forecast which assumes, essentially, that there is little or no additional precipitation over the balance of the water year. For more detailed information about the initial 2010 Central Valley Project water supply forecast, please go to <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/pa/water>. Under this scenario, some junior agricultural interests north and south of the Delta would receive an allocation of 5 percent of their water service contracts.

The Secretary further noted that "[t]he reality is that the Bay Delta ecosystem has collapsed, and a major, long-term solution is needed to secure reliable water flows. We are looking forward to input from the National Academy of Sciences on these questions and will continue to aggressively pursue a comprehensive water supply and restoration plan, working closely with Governor Schwarzenegger and his team, Senators Feinstein and Boxer, Congressman George Miller and other members of the delegation, and all stakeholders, so that California can have a sustainable water future."